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AUTHOR LeLieuvre, Robert B.; Silverthorne, Colin P.
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ABSTRACT

Criteria for evaluating part-time, adjunct faculty members employed by the University of San Francisco's adult external degree program are identified. Assumptions and objectives of the faculty development program are also specified. The College of Professional Studies offers undergraduate and graduate degrees in eight areas related to human resources and organizational development at approximately 40 classroom sites in California. Over a period of a year, discussions, field-testing, and refinements resulted in the elaboration of the following competencies against which all faculty members are measured: (1) general intellectual, (2) academic discipline, (3) practitioner, (4) teaching, (5) classroom management, (6) research advising, and (7) educational-administrative. Criteria for each area of competence were established and six specific, measurable behavioral anchors were linked to these criteria. The competence areas, criteria, and behavioral anchors are identified. It is noted that these criteria/indicators are the bases for all appointment, assignment, and re-assignment decisions, and that four instruments are used for faculty evaluation, including student and course evaluations, self-assessments, and observation. (SW)

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FACULTY EVALUATION IN AN ADULT EXTERNAL DEGREE PROGRAM

by
Robert B. LeLieuvre, Colin P. Silverthorne, et al
College of Professional Studies
University of San Francisco

Evaluating college-level classroom instruction is a complex and difficult task even in the best and most organized of circumstances. When instruction takes place in a variety of widely decentralized settings, is compressed in time and intensive in nature, and involves adult students, the task becomes more difficult and complicated. In addition to the many differences in approach to teaching and to learning when working with adults, greater attention must be paid to a number of issues ranging from matching faculty expertise with students' personal and professional interests and needs to ensuring consistency and optimal quality control.

The College of Professional Studies offers undergraduate and graduate degrees in eight areas related to human resources and organization development at approximately 40 classroom sites across the State of California. Students entering the undergraduate programs with approximately two years of transferable college credit and with 10-12 years of professional experience, earn senior status through the assessment of a Prior Life Learning Portfolio and complete their major course of study over a period of roughly 14 consecutive months. Students with a baccalaureate degree from an accredited institution and with a current managerial position, enroll in their graduate course of study over a period of 18 consecutive months and complete a thesis, directed research portfolio, or a directed research project in a six month period immediately following their coursework. In any given year, 1500-1800 students are enrolled in undergraduate and graduate degree programs.

The College employs approximately 250 part-time, adjunct faculty members on a term-by-term, contractual basis. A relatively small portion of that number work as portfolio evaluators, assessing students' experiential essays. The majority work as base instructors in the major courses of study. Core faculty members are human resources and/or organization development practitioners. The Jesuit heritage of the University, however, requires a number of other faculty members from a variety of disciplines---most notably humanities, writing, philosophy, and theology---to be involved in the instructional process. All faculty members hold the requisite credentials established by the University and by the regional accreditation commission as necessary to teach in undergraduate and/or graduate degree programs. Moreover, all faculty members have more than a modicum of experience teaching and/or training adults.

Approximately one-third of the faculty operates in the San Francisco Bay area; approximately one-third in the greater Los Angeles area. The remaining faculty members operate out of offices in Sacramento, the San Jose area, and the San Joaquin Valley.

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Detailed curriculum guides with classroom activities, content areas, assignments, tasks, and specific learning objectives are prepared for and provided to faculty and students for each course in all programs. Faculty members are expected to follow these guides, although they are free to supplement activities, assignments, content, and/or materials. Thus, at some small expense to the concept of "academic freedom," the College, its faculty and students, and the accrediting bodies have reasonable assurance that courses and programs are consistent, complete, and of similar and optimal quality no matter where they are offered throughout the State.

As another key element in the process of ensuring consistent, comprehensive, quality learning opportunities for students and as part of a commitment to professional development for faculty members, an ongoing program of faculty evaluation is currently being implemented. Several assumptions underlie this program. These are:

(1) The highest quality adult learning experiences are expected by students and important to faculty members.

(2) Feedback on teaching style, group process skills, and content knowledge is desirable for faculty members and for students.

(3) A College has an obligation to regularly provide a comprehensive performance appraisal to its faculty members.

(4) Re-assignment decisions are best made on the basis of complete information on performance.

(5) Faculty assessment and evaluation of instruction are vital in demonstrating quality to students, to the university community, and to accrediting commissions.

(6) Systematic feedback assists faculty members in planning their professional development activities.

The evaluation program seeks to attain the following objectives:

(1) To conduct thorough faculty and instructional assessments on a regular basis.

(2) To identify and to utilize relevant, reliable, and valid criteria in the assessment process.

(3) To provide faculty members with practical, systematic, and usable evaluative data and feedback.

(4) To use these evaluative data as the bases for performance appraisals, continuing educational needs assessments, rewards, and rehire decisions.

(5) To develop a viable assessment format (e.g., instruments, timeliness, feedback procedures).

(6) To make public the assumptions, objectives, criteria, and format.

Over the period of a year, discussions, field-tests, and refinements resulted in the elaboration of the following competencies against which all faculty members are measured: (1) general intellectual, (2) academic discipline, (3) practitioner, (4) teaching (5) classroom management, (6) research advising, and (7) educational-administrative. Criteria for each area of competence were established and six specific, measurable behavioral anchors tied to these criteria were delineated. Below are the competence areas, criteria, and behavioral anchors.

General Intellectual Competence

(1) Well-developed cognitive skills (e.g., analyzing, critiquing, theorizing, synthesizing, etc.).

(2) High-level language skills and rich quality of discussion(s).

(3) Metalogging (i.e., breadth of intellectual range, making general-particular links or transitions, using both divergent and convergent thinking).

(4) Openness and intellectual tolerance.

(5) Curiosity (i.e., commitment to inquiry).

(6) Creativity (i.e., appropriately innovative and, at the same time, disciplined).

Academic Discipline Competence

(1) A wide background and an appropriate degree in one's discipline.

(2) Evidence of an appropriate concentration or specialty in the field.

(3) Currency vis-a-vis literature and developments in the field.

(4) Contributions to the field (e.g., publications, academic activities and innovations, etc.).

(5) Broad academic experience with adult education models, processes, and students.

(6) Impressions of expertise provided by colleagues, mentors, and/or supervisors.

Practitioner Competence

(1) Contributions to the workplace (e.g., innovations, projects, technical reports, etc.).

(2) Breadth of professional experiences.

(3) Demonstrated and documented willingness to take on difficult and/or increasingly responsible tasks.

(4) Membership(s) in and active involvement(s) with professional associations/societies.

(5) Evidence of continuous professional development.

(6) Evidence of a commitment to keeping pace with the changing/evolving nature of the practice.

Teaching Competence

(1) Lectures and presentations are coherently organized, well-paced, interesting, engaging, and directed to the learning objectives.

(2) Instructor stimulates discussion(s) and facilitates interaction(s).

(3) Is sensitive and responsive to adult students' needs and learning styles.

(4) Answers questions appropriately and with examples from theory and from practice.

(5) Successfully conducts structured activities, simulations, case studies, and group discussions which are related to the learning objectives.

(6) Provides students with accurate, clear, constructive, and on-going verbal and written feedback.

Classroom Management Competence

(1) Takes responsibility for, structures, and controls the learning process.

(2) Maintains rapport and good working relationships with students and a professional atmosphere in classes.

(3) Manages conflicts that might arise due to personalities, value differences, disparate points of view, etc.

(4) Clearly defines assignments, requirements, and grading criteria, and relates these to the learning objectives.

(5) Returns written work in a timely manner.

(6) Models the skills of a problem-solving discussion leader.

Research Advising Competence

(1) Demonstrates knowledge of appropriate methods of inquiry and research designs including qualitative and quantitative approaches.

(2) Has the ability to help students select an appropriate research question or problem.

(3) Demonstrates skill in supervising applied, organizationally relevant research projects.

(4) Has the ability to guide students in the use of standard research report formats.

(5) Sets deadlines for students and returns materials in a reasonable and timely manner.

(6) Is actively involved in the research project (i.e., makes site visits, reads, reviews, and comments on drafts).

Educational-Administrative Competence

(1) Submits required forms, materials, and/or reports in a timely manner.

(2) Facilitates smooth transitions among instructors.

(3) Adheres to the terms of the contract (e.g., holds class for the full four hours, holds regular office hour(s) outside of class time, etc.).

(4) Is available to students and staff in person, by phone, or by letter.

(5) Attends faculty meetings on a regular basis.

(6) Represents the University (i.e., encourages students, assists students with administrative difficulties, alerts staff regarding potential problems, etc.).

These competencies, criteria, and behavioral anchors are the bases for all appointment, assignment, and re-assignment decisions. Four instruments, based on the above, comprise the Evaluation Package. The four instruments---the Preview & Review Evaluation Form, the Student Evaluation Form (the Instructor and Course Evaluation System, University of Illinois), the Faculty Self-Assessment Form, and the Site Visit Form---are composed of scaled, open-ended, self-report, and/or observational items reflecting the seven competencies. Supporting documentation is required for all self-report and observational items.

A linear, additive scoring format with cutting lines is used for all decisions. Specifically, for each competency, a six-point scale is established, using the observable/measurable behavioral anchors. A single score-point is assigned for each behavior demonstrated. A cutting line of 67% of all items within each competency is utilized. A total score at or above this value indicates that a competency has been attained. For all competencies, two cutting lines are used (i.e., 67% of the competencies for initial appointment and 75% of the competencies for re-appointment). A total score at or above these values indicates that standards set respectively for appointment to or retention in the faculty pool have been met.

The academic administrators of the various programs complete the initial preview assessment after a credential review, an individual interview with potential faculty members, a group screening of several potential faculty members conducted by several academic staff members, reference checks, and debriefing discussions. Faculty members and undergraduate students complete their respective evaluations at the end of each academic term; for graduate programs, the respective evaluations are completed at the end of each course module. Newly appointed faculty members receive a site visit either by the academic administrators or by lead faculty members (i.e., long-term faculty members who have demonstrated a commitment to the College and repeatedly high-quality instruction over time) twice during a contract period; other faculty members, once during this period.

All evaluative data are summarized either by the University of Illinois or by the academic administrators, and a written report is generated. In an individual meeting, the academic program administrator reviews the data and the report, identifies strengths and weaknesses, and makes recommendations for further development. A copy of the report is provided to the faculty member, and one is retained in that person's permanent file. The entire evaluation program, its format, and all the instruments are reviewed and, if necessary, revised each year.

The first full-scale test of the program, its formats, and the instruments is currently under way. Initial impressions are that, overall, the schema is comprehensive, more rigorous than the College's previous approaches, and sensitive to "false positives"---those instructors who are typically tagged as appropriate for and successful in the various degree programs, when in fact, they may not be either.